DISCUSSION

HEIDEGGER'S "WHAT IS METAPHYSICS?"

Dread reveals Nothing. "Dread" is the name of a *mood.* We neither perceive, conceive, nor imagine Nothing. In dread we are brought face to face with Nothing.

The mood of dread has a peculiar intentional character. When I think, I think of something; when I am afraid, I am afraid of something. But in Heidegger's use: "although 'dread' is always 'dread of,' it is not dread of this or that .... The indefiniteness of *what* we dread is not just lack of definition: it represents the essential impossibility of defining the 'what'." [1]

We see, in the above, that Heidegger appears to accept the intentional character of dread and yet – in his succeeding remarks – appears to deny that dread has an intentional character: " 'Nothing' is revealed in dread, but not as something that 'is.' Neither can it be taken as an object." [2] But if dread is always dread *of,* it would seem obvious that some "object" must be the target of dread. What might this target be?

Heidegger has, seemingly, eliminated all of the candidates. I think we are forced to conclude that Heidegger both denies and affirms that dread is intentional (i.e., that "dread" is always "dread of" with the "of" requiring a complement): moving from "In 'dread' there is nothing one has dread of" to "In dread one has dread of (the) Nothing." He denies the intentionality of dread in denying that dread has a target-*object.* He affirms the intentionality by treating the lack of a target-object as a target.

Oskar Kraus [3] and Rudolf Carnap [4] criticized Heidegger for his strange

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[1] Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," in *Existence and Being,* ed. W. Brock (Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1949), pp. 325-349. The first quotation is from page 335. Heidegger's essay, under the title "Was ist Metaphysik?" was first delivered as a lecture at the University of Freiburg in 1929. It was put into print in the same year.

[2] *Ibid.,* p. 337.

[3] Oskar Kraus, "Über Alles und Nichts," *Philosophische Hefte,* ed. by M. Beck, Vol. 3, 1930, pp. 140-146. See, especially, p. 146 for a direct citation from "Was ist Metaphysik?" which is clearly, throughout the article, one of Kraus' targets.

[4] Rudolf Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," in *Logical Positivism,* ed. by A. J. Ayer (The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1959), pp. 60-81. Pages 69-72 make special reference to Heidegger's lecture. Carnap's article originally appeared in German in *Erkenntnis,* Vol. 2, 1932.

use (or misuse) of "nothing" but neither said anything about Heidegger's peculiar way with *dread* and *dread of*. It is my thesis that Heidegger's famous rejection of "logic" (including "logistics") stems from his phenomenological, or pseudophenomenological, analysis of dread. It is that analysis which seems to require that intentionality be both asserted and denied in connection with dread, and it is the assertion *and* denial which lead to the ambiguous use of "nothing" noted by Carnap in which "nothing" functions as both noun and logical particle.

It is only by using "nothing" as – to follow Carnap – "a logical particle that serves for the formulation of a negative existential statement" that Heidegger can distinguish his dread from, say, anxiety. It is only by using "nothing" as the target of dread that Heidegger can make his mood significant. (For if "Dread reveals nothing" meant only "There is not anything which dread reveals" or – "Dread does not reveal anything" there would be nothing to talk about.)

But Heidegger is free to reply that the mood of dread, as an undeniable datum of experience, *justifies* the ambiguous use of "nothing." It is clear that an attack on Heidegger's lecture, if it is to be forceful, cannot simply *start* with the fact that Heidegger misuses "nothing" or makes up sentences (such as *Das Nichts selbst nichtet*) which Carnap cannot symbolize. There is no doubt, as Heidegger is the first to insist, that – by all ordinary criteria – he misuses "nothing" and goes against logic. However, if Heidegger's analysis of dread is in order it is so much the worse for ordinary language and logic.

The *first* question to ask is: Is Heidegger right about dread? Is there (could there be) such a mood? What Kraus and Carnap say about the "Nothing" may be taken as an indirect proof that there is no such mood but indirect proofs are as suspicious in philosophy as they are to the intuitionist philosopher of mathematics.

For Heidegger himself the consequences of his analysis of dread lead him to suppose that logic itself has been put in question – not the mood of dread. He certainly has sympathizers on this score.[5] It may even be claimed (turning the tables on Carnap) that Heidegger is a really pure empiricist who will not allow logic to stand in the way of things as they actually are experienced. After all, an indirect proof works only if one

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[5] See, for example, William Barrett's very interesting "Negation, Finitude, and the Nature of Man," in his well-known *Irrational Man* (Doubleday Anchor Books, Garden City, N.Y., 1962), pp. 283-292; H. Kuhn, "Existentialism and Metaphysics," *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 37-60; G. A. Schrader, "Heidegger's Ontology of Human Existence," *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 35-56; John Wild, *The Challenge of Existentialism* (Indiana U.P., Bloomington, 1955).

is willing to accept certain principles of logic. If a mystic really *does* experience 3=1 he will not worry about the consequences for arithmetic.

To emulate Heidegger: what about this dread? Must we take the first step which leads to the repudiation of logic? Is there, after all, such a mood as the Heideggerian dread? It must be admitted that a great many people seem to encounter Nothingness. Can this experience of the dread revealing the Nothing be *denied?* I think it can be.

First, we must make a distinction between an experience and the description of that experience. To deny the legitimacy or adequacy of a description of an experience is not necessarily to deny the experience itself. It is possible that Heidegger's paradoxes follow not from the fact of a rare mood but from his incorrect description of it.

If we consider that description we find ourselves, at the very beginning, confronted with the undefended thesis that moods *reveal.*[6] But there are obvious counterinstances to this: "Jones is afraid of Smith and doesn't know it" is neither absurd nor implausible, yet "afraid" is clearly intentional in this sentence. Jones may very well know that he is afraid (be victim to the mood of fear) and yet not know the object of his fear. The mood itself cannot be said to reveal its own object. Heidegger moves from the plausible, if debatable thesis, that moods relate to matters beyond themselves and the person undergoing them to the inference that moods reveal that which they are "of" or "intend."

It is clear from Heidegger's own description of dread that it is *Heidegger* who draws out the implication that dread reveals the Nothing. It is Heidegger, and not the one undergoing dread, who discovers that dread reveals the Nothing by a reflection on the description of dread Heidegger has provided. We may question either the description or the reflection without calling into doubt the experience of dread itself. In fact, Heidegger says, "We ourselves confirm that dread reveals Nothing – when we have got over our dread." [7] It is *after* the mood that one discovers that nothing was revealed. It is true that Heidegger also says, "The fact that when we are caught in the uncanniness of dread we often try to break the empty silence by words spoken at random, only proves the presence of dread." [8] And one might take this to mean that the Nothing is immediately revealed in dread. But even if we bypass the odd picture of this mood in which, very often, words are spoken at random we can hardly ignore the use of *prove*. *Prove* cannot correctly function as reveal. If dread announces itself it does not prove itself. We do not

[6] *Existence and Being,* pp. 333-335.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 336.
[8] *Op. cit.,* p. 336.

prove the existence of that with which we are immediately confronted. (And what applies to dread applies, in turn, to whatever dread may be said to reveal.) Clearly, in Heidegger's remarks, "proves" functions as *inferable from* the datum. And, moreover, not inferable from the datum as given but from the datum as described. We are several moves from the datum itself before we reach Heidegger's paradoxical conclusions.[9]

This is not to deny (nor to affirm!) that all moods may be intentional and, in a manner of speaking, "reveal." For my moods may lead me to ask questions but this hardly means that they reveal the answers. Still, it may be said that whatever Heidegger's questionable assumptions about moods in general, *dread* is a very special case in which a revelation does take place; and furthermore, we must not suppose in advance that a description of this mood is either impossible or undesirable. We might suppose that the mood gives us an intuitive knowledge which reflection converts – via description – into conceptual knowledge.

The odd thing is that none of the conceptual knowledge alleged to be gained from a reflection on dread reveals any breakdown in "logic" or "logistics" – with the significant exception of the thesis that since the target of dread is neither this nor that its target must be the nothing. Furthermore, we do not *need* that exception to distinguish dread from anxiety. Consider – and here I compress a good deal of discussion on the topic of dread – typical candidates for what dread is alleged to reveal:

> Dread reveals the radical contingency of the universe (Sartre),[10] dread reveals the breakdown or possible breakdown of the principle of sufficient reason (the well-known existential "absurd"), dread reveals the inevitable fact that I am going to die. Dread reveals that it is up to me to let the world of beings-in-the-world be or let the world 'world,'[11] dread reveals that my world is going to vanish, dread forces me to ask why I am here or why anything at all is here (or both), dread reveals the importance of the future and the need for me to have the courage to be, dread reveals that I am condemned to be free, dread reveals all of the above.

[9] In recent articles E. T. Gendlin and G. A. Schrader have defended, from different standpoints, Heidegger's general way of dealing with moods or emotions as intentional and epistemologically significant. Neither, however, deals with "What is Metaphysics?" Gendlin, in particular, raises some objections against the phenomenological method which Heidegger – at least in the period up through 1929 – may be supposed to have been using and attempts to answer these objections. See: E. T. Gendlin, "Expressive Meanings," *An Invitation to Phenomenology,* ed. James M. Edie (Quadrangle Books, Inc., Chicago, 1965), pp. 240-251 and G. A. Schrader, "The Structure of Emotion," *An Invitation to Phenomenology, Op. Cit., pp.* 252-265.

[10] See Sartre's interesting discussion of Heidegger in *Being and Nothingness* (Philosophical Library, New York, 1965), pp. 16-21.

[11] I think there is here a connection between "What is Metaphysics?" and *Vom Wesen des Grundes* (V. Klostermann, Frankfort A. M., 5th ed., 1965). See pp. 43-44. I am not quoting directly.

There are two things to be noted about these candidates (taken separately) for the conceptual product of what is primordially given or "intuited" in dread. Firstly, it is hard to see how anyone could, for example, know that the world is radically contingent if he did not already possess the concepts "necessity" and "contingency" and have reason to suppose that, say, "There is a world" is not a necessary truth. Neither Heidegger nor, so far as I can see, any other phenomenologist of existentialist leanings does anything at all to show that the mood of dread is the *source* rather than the *result* of information about the world (or, more precisely, the result or emotional offshoot of what is taken to be information about the world). Is it dread that reveals to me that I am going to die, or is it my knowledge that I am going to die which, at least partially, accounts for my dread? There is no need to multiply questions here so I will turn to the second point I wish to note.

None of these revelations goes against logic. Logic "tells" one anything but that the world is necessary, that *my* world can go on without me, or that my existence is necessary. Logic has nothing to say about any of this and none of this has anything to say against logic. None of the candidates for dread reveals the truth of a logical contradiction.

It may well be true to say that some of them reveal implications drawn from the study of logic (as in the analytic-synthetic distinction) and implications drawn from various areas of knowledge and belief. But this returns us to my first point: is it at all unlikely that dread reflects knowledge and belief rather than producing belief?

Perhaps I have left out a candidate which really does go against "logic" (and, therefore, by implication what usually counts as knowledge). Certainly I have left out the famous "Das Nichts selbst nichtet" (given in Brock's collection as "Nothing nihilates of itself" – page 339 – and which I would prefer to translate as "The Nothing itself nots") but here Heidegger is investigating the separate question of the *essence* of Nothing and his famous statement comes so late in the essay that I am not sure that he holds that dread reveals the *essence* of Nothing (or The Nothing). But even if "Das Nichts selbst nichtet" were admitted as a candidate I do not know what it would mean to understand this proposition against all logic. What I make out of it (and this implies what I – assuming the role of a phenomenologist – would make out of my reflections on dread if I took it that, in dread, I somehow intuited a noting nothing) is simply that in dread the fact that the world need not be is strongly impressed upon me. The fact refers to a potentiality of the world: not-being or Nothing. The "noting" refers to the impressing of this fact which, as a potentiality, is not *given* in any ordinary way.

If "Das Nichts selbst nichtet" *must* refer to a logical impossibility

which is nonetheless realized we are back where we started with the shift in the use of "nothing" which Heidegger supposes to follow from a correct analysis of dread. In short, the question is begged. (This should not be taken to imply that my suggested analysis of a "nonabsurd" "Das Nichts selbst nichtet" is particularly satisfactory. I simply used my analysis as an illustration of making sense out of nonstandard sentences.)

It is naturally arguable (as "Das Nichts selbst nichtet" serves to emphasize) that Heidegger's dread – or the dread to which he refers – cannot be described in any language (and this may be used to account for the neologisms in "What is Metaphysics?"). In this event, Heidegger would be – as Schlick supposed was true of all metaphysicians – attempting to communicate the incommunicable.[12] But if he is doing this he must – of course – fail and what he has to say cannot form part of philosophy although what he says – perhaps as an example of mysticism – may serve as a *datum* for philosophy.[13] Or, more positively, we may say that Heidegger is, in effect, pointing towards things beyond the categorizing powers (and necessities) of language.[14] But even on this view there is no reason to suppose that Heidegger's pointing would point to a logical impossibility as a truth wrung from the things themselves or our deepest experience.

S. J. PALUCH.

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO.

[12] See Moritz Schlick, "Form and Content," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Gerold and Co., Vienna, 1938), pp. 151-217. In particular, pp. 196-197. It may be noted that Schlick's theory about the nature of metaphysics is quite different from that of Carnap although both, of course, reject metaphysical expressions as "meaningless" or "pseudosentences."

[13] H. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement,* Vol. 1 (M. Nijhoff, The Hague, 1960), pp. 271(354. Especially, pp. 290-291 and pp. 351-352.

[14] See Stanley Cavell's extremely interesting and suggestive article, "Existentialism and Analytical Philosophy," in *Daedalus,* Vol. 93, pp. 946-974. Cavell remarks on Heidegger only very briefly in a footnote to his article but remarks on the limitations, or seeming limitations, of language for serving to say what Heidegger has to say.